

Creative History
activity packs



Ancient Egyptians



Jane Bower

A David Fulton Book

Ancient Egyptians Pack

Learning Objectives

This pack addresses key areas of both the study unit A Past Non-European Society / Ancient Egypt (NC KS2 History) and NC KS2 Art, as well as aspects of drama, dance and design and technology. Through using the workcards, children are given practical opportunities to:

- learn about history from a variety of perspectives – social, religious, cultural and aesthetic
- learn about the everyday lives of men and women
- understand the importance of archaeology in finding out about people and societies
- design and make images and artefacts
- develop an appreciation of the art of the period and recognise how it reflects the time in which it was created
- explore a range of materials, tools and techniques, both well-known and unusual
- compare ideas and methods of the past with those of today
- respond imaginatively to historical facts through role play
- interpret music through dance
- build a performance
- work on their own and with others
- use and extend skills and confidence in speaking and listening

How to use these cards

These cards have been designed by experienced primary teachers who have carried out the activities with one or more classes, or large or small groups, on many occasions. The cards have been written chiefly for use by teachers or other adults in charge of pupils, but we have worded them so that they could also be used directly by a capable child or small group, at the teacher's discretion. The cards are deliberately not numbered – they are designed to be used in a completely flexible way to complement, extend or introduce aspects of a topic on Ancient Egypt. Teachers can use some or all of the cards, in any order which is appropriate to their work.

Jane Bower trained at St Martin's College of Education in Lancaster, and has a degree in Art and Design. She was a full-time primary teacher in Lancaster and the Lake District for twelve years. She is now a part-time primary teacher and an independent consultant / adviser in KS1 and KS2 art, drama and dance, travelling to primary schools countrywide. She also works as a teacher for History Off The Page. Jane writes regularly on practical classroom arts activities for several educational journals including Child Education and Five to Seven, and produces teachers' workpacks for BBC Schools Radio Drama.

History Off The Page comprises a team of experienced primary teachers who travel individually to British schools in England and Europe. They offer a wide range of stimulating, authentic, hands-on history days, using original materials, artefacts and role play for up to 90 children, covering NC periods: Tudors, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Victorians and Vikings for KS2; and special KS1 days including Castles and Toys.

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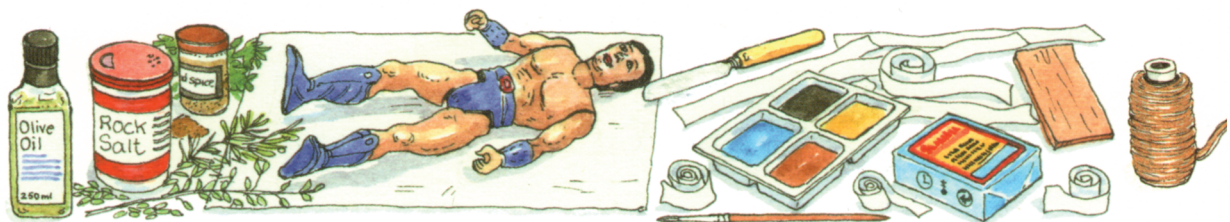
THE APPRENTICE EMBALMER



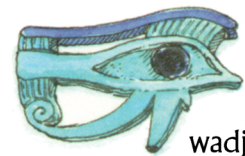
Because the afterlife was so important to the Ancient Egyptians, embalmers were highly trained in the rituals of preserving the bodies of the dead. You can pretend you are apprentice embalmers, learning the skills involved. This activity is most effective if you treat it respectfully and act it out as a serious piece of drama. (See drama card: 'Weighing the Heart'.)

Each group of apprentices will need:

a washable doll (e.g. plastic) • blunt knife • rock salt • olive oil • herbs or spices • white cloth, cut into strips • clay or Sculpey • thin sheet of balsa wood • paints • small brush • surface, e.g. white cloth, to work on • string



To prepare for your embalming ritual you may like to make some **amulets** from clay or Sculpey. Some examples are shown here. You should also model an **instrument** for the Opening the Mouth ceremony (shown below).



wadjet eye



scarab

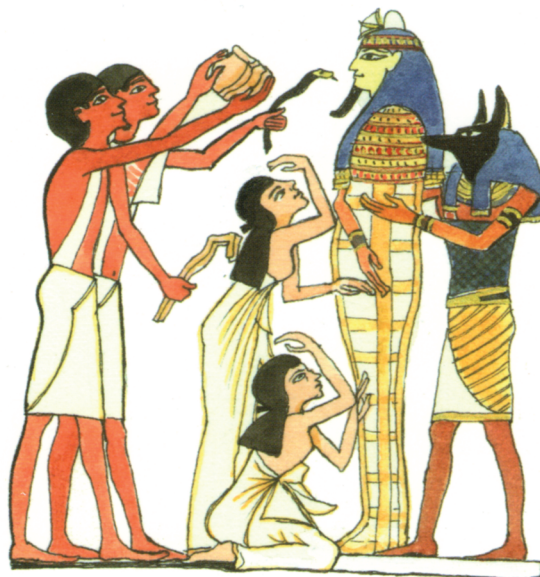


headrest



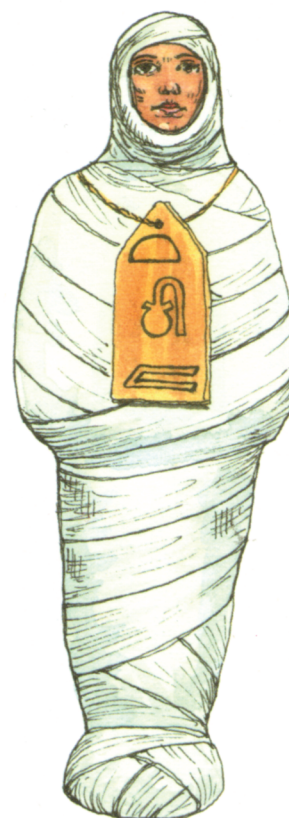
You will also need four **canopic jars** (see 'The Street of the Potters' card) standing empty beside the embalming area.

Your embalmed body will also need a mummy label to identify it. You can cut this from balsa wood and paint it with the person's name in hieroglyphs, and a picture of the god Anubis, the god of embalming.



The Ritual

Place the doll on the cloth or other surface. Using the knife, pretend to make a cut in the left side. Mime removing the liver, lungs, stomach and intestine — a different apprentice could be responsible for each — and put them in the canopic jars. You could murmur spells, or imaginary prayers to some of the Ancient Egyptian gods. The doll should now be covered in rock salt to represent natron. (This was used to dry the body out, and was left on for 40 days.) After a time, remove the doll from the salt and mix together the olive oil and ground herbs or spices. Rub this mixture into the doll's body. Wrap the doll tightly and carefully in the strips of cloth, placing the amulets among them for protection as you bandage. Finally, perform the Opening the Mouth ceremony. The mummy is held upright and the instrument is used to touch the mouth so that the mummy can eat, drink and move in the afterlife.

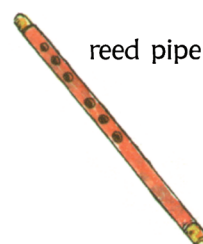


A DANCE FOR THE FESTIVAL



finger cymbals

Music, song and dance played a very important part in the lives of the Ancient Egyptians. Tomb paintings feature scenes of dancing, musicians, parties and entertainment, and instruments, such as the ones pictured here, were placed in tombs to provide music in the afterlife.

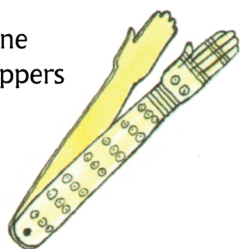


reed pipe

One of the greatest public festivals of Ancient Egypt, of which dancing and music would have been a vital part, was the **Festival of the Nile**. This celebrated the annual flooding of the river which brought life to the land. The floods meant that the rich fertile Nile mud would cover the lands and cause the crops to grow. The Egyptians believed that the flooding of the Nile was the god **Osiris** rising from the dead, while the blood-red trickle when the Nile dried up each year was the life of Osiris ebbing away.

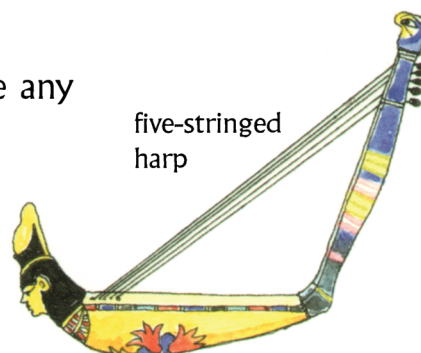


bone clappers



For your dance you could use any instruments similar to these, and your sistrum if you have made one (see 'Sistrum and Shabti' card).

five-stringed harp

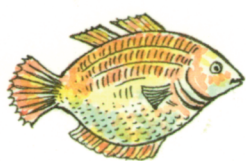
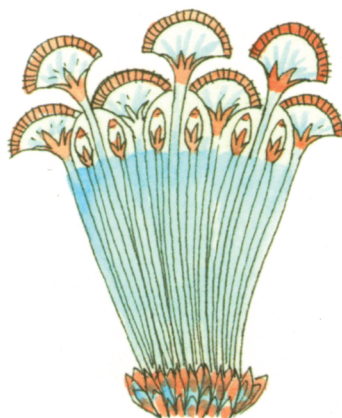


To build your festival dance, first decide on your music. You may be able to find an Eastern-sounding piece played on similar instruments, or you could choose a lively, celebratory piece and accompany it.

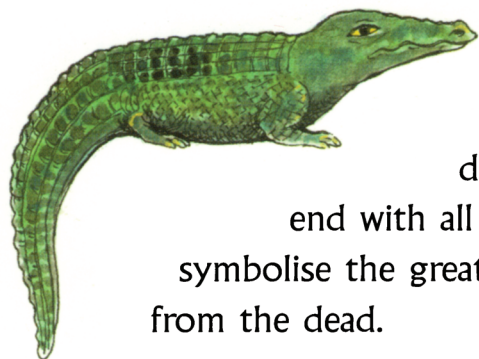


Think of ways to show the story of what you are celebrating. You might begin by moving your bodies to symbolise the rising of the Nile waters from a small trickle to a great flood. Then out of the water, tall papyrus reeds could grow, swaying with the movement of the river.

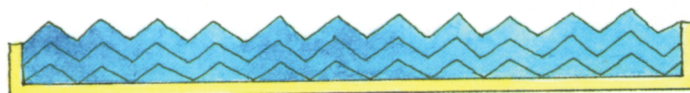
As the reeds sway, other dancers can become the teeming life of the Nile, depicting some of the creatures which depend on it.



Fish were a staple source of food and a charm against drowning. Watersnakes slithered sinuously through the reeds. Hawks and vultures hovered over the water, searching for food.



Rabbits and hares leapt along the shore, and snapping crocodiles lurked in the deeper waters. The dance could end with all the dancers rising together to symbolise the great moment when Osiris rises from the dead.



FANS AND FLYWHISKS



In such a hot climate, fans and flywhisks were useful articles for the Ancient Egyptians. Some fans were richly decorated, but servants would use plain ones to fan a charcoal fire. Flywhisks became a status symbol, and would be carried by courtiers.

To make a fan you will need:

wooden spoon handle (left over from the activity on the 'Kohl and Ointment Holders' card) • turquoise, gold, terracotta and black paints • small paintbrushes • glue • thick, stiff A4 card (e.g. mounting board or greyboard) • wire for wrapping • wirecutter • scissors • pencil • threads (e.g. Anchor, Sylko) and beads in colours to match paints

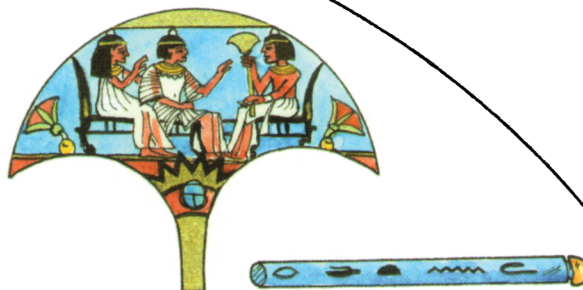


1 Begin by tracing the fan template on the back of this card. Transfer it to the stiff cardboard and cut it out. NOTE: if the card is too difficult to cut with the scissors, an adult may need to use a craft knife, or prepare the cut-out fans in advance.

2 Plan the design for both sides of your fan and the spoon handle. Use photographs of Egyptian artefacts to give you ideas – hieroglyphs, lotus flowers, people ...

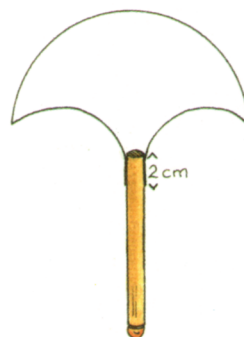


3 Mark your designs lightly on to the fan and handle in pencil.



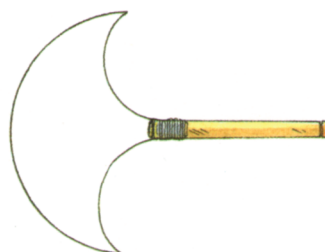
4 Paint your designs as carefully as you can on both sides of the fan and on the spoon handle. Allow to dry.

5 Glue the card tab of the fan on to the sawn-off end of the handle, making sure that the handle juts into the fan by about 2cm as shown.



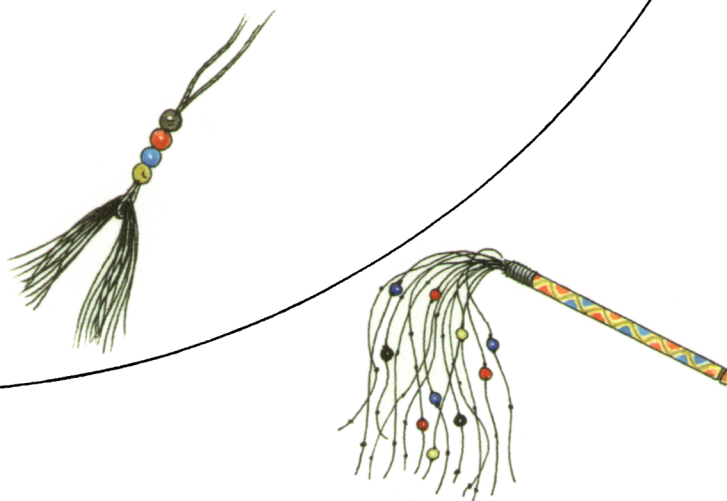
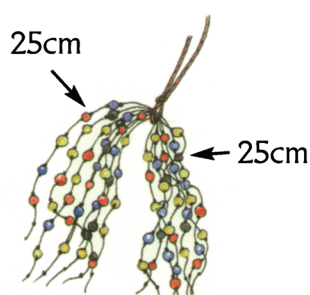
Extend this tab a further 3cm

6 Bind the tab on to the handle with wire to further strengthen the join.



For a flywhisk, make one large tassel by cutting threads about 50cm long, knotting beads on them and tying in the middle. Tie, glue, and/or bind the tassel with wire to the painted handle (see bottom right).

7 Make a tassel from lengths of thread folded in two and tied in the middle. Add beads to the tie and knot round the end of the handle (see front).



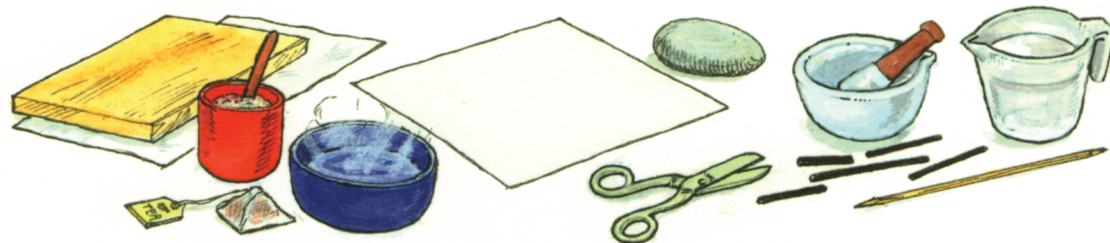
PROTECTIVE SPELL, PROTECTIVE CASE



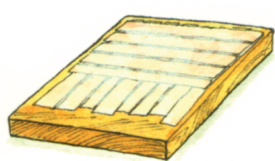
As well as amulets, spells or charms were used to ward off evil. These were written on papyrus and stored in a small case worn round the neck. The spell was to protect the wearer; the case to protect the spell.

To make a 'papyrus' spell you will need:

wooden board • sheet of thin white paper • teabag* • bowl of warm water • scissors • glue • piece of white cloth (the Egyptians used linen) • smooth, heavy stone (baked potato sized) • charcoal • pestle and mortar • water • wooden skewer



Papyrus was a triangular-stemmed reed which grew by the Nile. The pith inside would be split into strips for paper. To make your paper a similar colour to papyrus, dip the teabag in the warm water, squeeze, and wipe it smoothly over both sides of the sheet.



When dry, cut the paper into strips 1.5 cm wide. Place a neat row of these vertically on the board as shown. Apply glue thinly and carefully to each strip and place more strips horizontally across until all the vertical ones are covered. Wipe off

excess glue with a damp cloth. Place the piece of linen over the paper and roll or press the stone over it. The Egyptians would do this to weld the papyrus strips together.



Decide on the spell you are going to write. It could be asking one of the Egyptian gods to protect you, or a charm against evil:

'Avaunt, ye dead man, who comes in the darkness, who enters stealthily, with nose behind, face turned backwards.'

(From 'The Golden Goblet', by E. J. McGraw.)

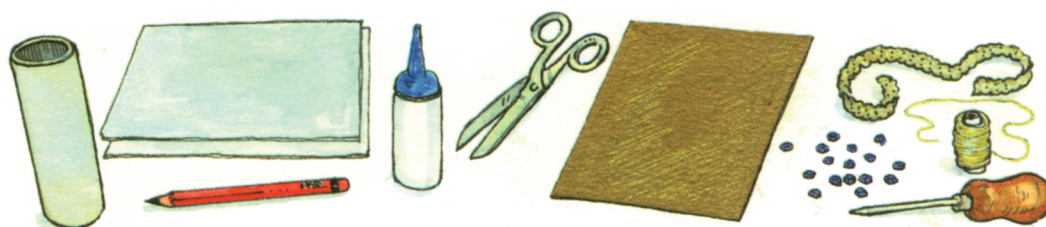
Grind the charcoal in the mortar. Add a little water to make ink. Using the wooden skewer as a pen, write your spell on the 'papyrus' and cut it out.



*Pyramid-shaped, of course!

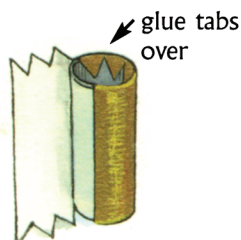
To make a spell container you will need:

narrow cardboard tube, or card rolled into a tube • very thin card (or slightly thick paper) • scissors • glue • gold paper • gold thread (not too thin) • decorations, e.g. gold braid, 'jewels' • bradawl • pencil

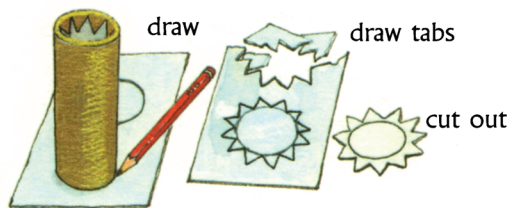


The Ancient Egyptians' spell containers were small, but papyrus was very thin and could be rolled to a tiny size. You will need to make your container fit your spell.

1 Cut the tube to fit your spell. Cover the tube in gold paper, cutting tabs to fold over the two ends to give a good finish.



2 Now make two lids for the tube ends — so you need to do steps 2–6 TWICE. Draw round the end of the tube on to the card. Draw tabs round the circle. Cut the tabbed circle out. (MAKE TWO.)



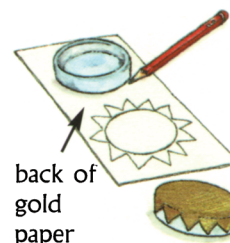
3 Cut a strip of card for the side of the lid, long enough to wrap round the tube leaving an overlap. Glue it to form a ring to fit round the tube. Glue the circular tabbed top on to it. (MAKE TWO)



4 Cut another strip of card and glue it round the lid to cover the tabs. Repeat for lid 2.



5 Cover the lid in gold paper. Draw round the lid. Draw tabs as before, cut out and stick to lid. Glue tabs only, not circle, for a good finish.



6 Cover the gold tabs with a strip of gold paper. For an extra good finish, add tabs to fold underneath the rim of the lid. Repeat for lid 2.

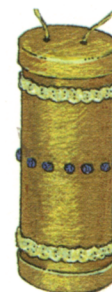


7 Make two holes in the top lid with the bradawl. Thread a length of gold cord through, long enough to go over your head. Tie the ends under the lid.



8 Put the two lids on the tube and add any decorations.

9 Put your rolled up spell inside and wear your case round your neck.





SISTRUM AND SHABTI



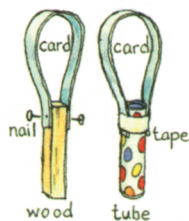
Tomb paintings show that the Ancient Egyptians loved music and dance, and teach us what instruments they used. A sistrum was a sacred rattle, carried by women priests at special ceremonies, to worship the goddess of dance and music, Hathor.

To make a sistrum, you will need:

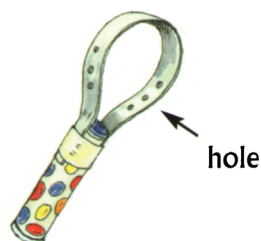
round-nosed pliers • strip of thick, but flexible card, 35 × 3cm (an adult may have to cut this with a craft knife) • 3 × 10cm pieces of wire (not too thin) • 12 beads (with holes large enough for wire to pass through) OR six metal milk bottle tops cut into 12 small discs • bradawl • scissors • EITHER: piece of balsa wood approx. 4 × 4 × 12cm (or any size near to this) • hammer, nails, carving tools, paints, brushes OR: empty Smarties tube/toothpaste box, masking tape, glue, gold paper



1 Bend the strip of card and attach to the balsa wood handle with nails or to the cardboard tube/box with masking tape.

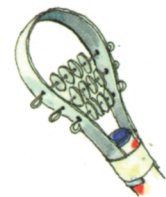


2 Make six holes with the bradawl at opposite sides of the card as shown.



3 Put the first wire through a hole. Thread four beads or milk

bottle top discs on to it. Poke the wire through the opposite hole. Bend the two ends to hold the wire in place using the pliers. Repeat with the other two wires and eight beads.



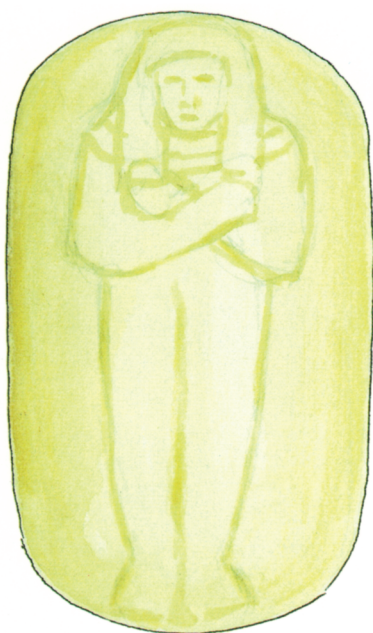
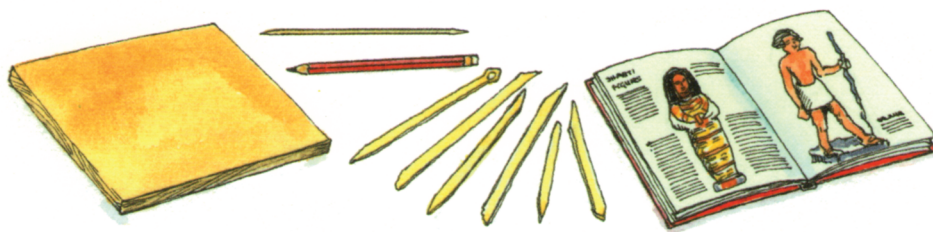
4 Try carving and painting your balsa wood handle, or cover your cardboard handle in gold paper. You can also paint the cardboard strip.



The Ancient Egyptians believed that in the afterlife you might be asked to do work for the god Osiris. Rich people such as Pharaohs, priests and scribes would have servants to work for them, so their tombs were provided with models of servants, called shabtis, when they died. The shabtis would also watch over the dead person to guard them from evil.

To make a shabti, you will need:

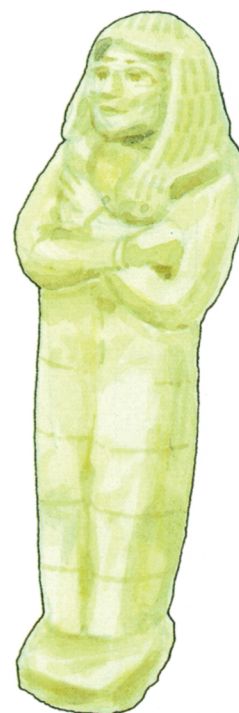
A bar of plain household soap • a suitable surface to work on, e.g. a wooden board • wooden skewer or pencil • wooden or plastic clay tools • photographs of shabtis



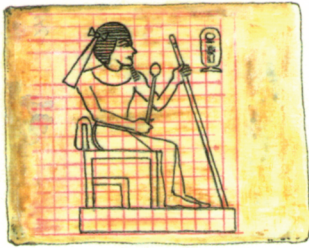
Some shabtis were made of carved and painted plaster, and others of carved stone. Soap is an easy material to carve, but you must go carefully, a little at a time.

Begin by marking out your shabti with the skewer or pencil as shown (left). Then gradually carve away the parts you want to be lower, such as around the arms and under the chin. Remember, when carving you can only remove, never add on! Keep turning your model to check each view.

NB: Save your soap shavings to make soapballs — see TUDORS pack.



TOMB PAINTINGS AND BAS RELIEF



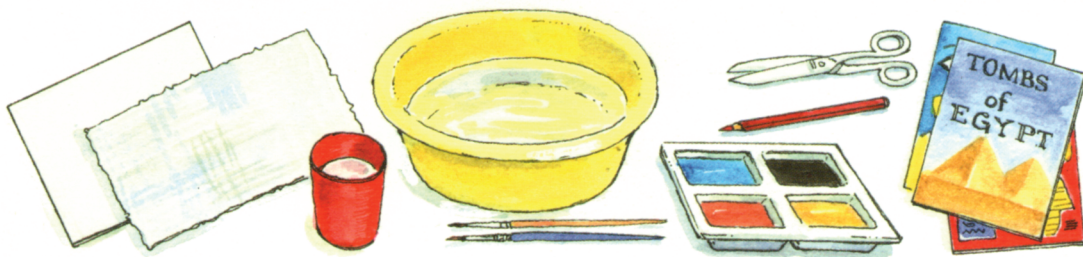
Tomb artists were trained to draw the human figure to precise proportions marked on a grid, which is why the people in Egyptian tomb paintings look so



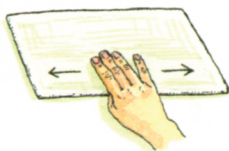
similar. The grid was marked in red and the final correct drawing in black. Brushes were made of sticks or reeds with the ends chewed to make bristles, and the artists sometimes used their tongues to lick out mistakes! (not recommended)

To make a tomb painting you will need:

small brushes • sheet of stiff card • Modroc (plaster bandage) • scissors • reddish crayon • paints in suitable colours (black, terracotta, yellow ochre, turquoise) • bowl of water • water pot • ideas for your painting (photographs of tomb paintings in books)



1 Cut a piece of Modroc 1cm larger all round than the piece of card. Hold the Modroc, stretched out, under the water in the bowl for 8 seconds. Take it out and smooth it over the card, binding the edges over.



2 Rub the front of the Modroc with your wet fingers until smooth. Wash your hands.

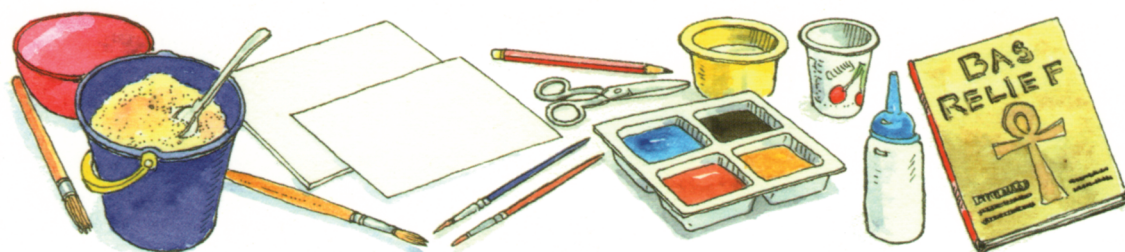
3 Draw your design on the wet plaster with the red crayon.

4 Paint your design. The Egyptians painted while the plaster was still wet, so that the paint soaked in and became part of the wall surface — one reason why the paintings have lasted so long!

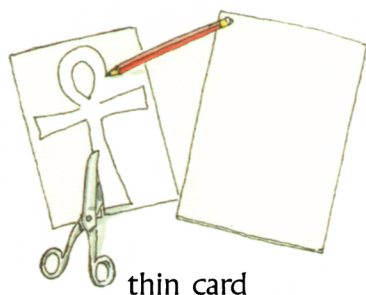
A relief is a method used in art to make a design stand out from a surface. A bas relief was a technique used by the Ancient Egyptians.

To make a bas relief you will need:

Dry play sand • paints in same colours as overleaf • water pot • PVA (white glue) • mixing pots (e.g. margarine tubs) • old bristle paintbrushes • small brushes • stiff white card OR card covered with Modroc as shown overleaf • thin card • scissors • pencil • photographs/books for ideas



1 Decide on your design. Choose something with a simple outline rather than a lot of detail. Your design must be smaller than your background card. Draw it on the thin card and cut it out.



white card
or Modroc-
covered
card for
background

2 Mix some sand, PVA and paint in a mixing pot. It should not be runny, or too stiff and lumpy to paint with.



3 Place your cut-out design carefully on the background card. Use an



old bristle paintbrush to paint or dab the sandy mixture around the stencil and in any holes.

4 Carefully peel off the stencil. Use the small paintbrush and paints to paint in the flat part of the design. You may prefer to wait until the sandy part has dried before you do this.



Ancient Egyptian artisans worked in different areas of a city – the Street of the Goldsmiths, the Street of the Carpenters, etc. Turn your classroom into the Street of the Potters by recreating some of these ancient artefacts.

THE STREET OF THE POTTERS

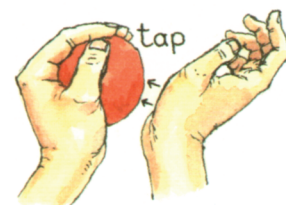
To make your pottery you will need:

terracotta school clay or air-drying modelling clay* • wooden roller • square- and round-ended wooden dowels • blunt clay knife • mat to work on • barrier cream (unscented handcream) to protect the hands • bucket • old paintbrush • tissue paper • scraps of white cloth

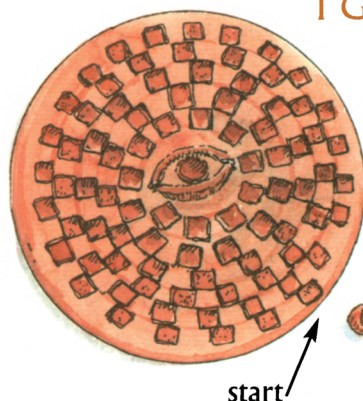


Rub a small amount of the barrier cream into your hands and take a piece of clay. Knock it into a ball with the heel of your hand to remove any air bubbles (this is called wedging).

Choose which artefact you are going to make. Here are some ideas:



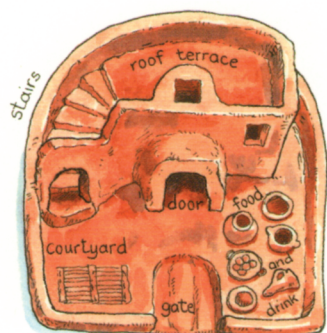
1 Game of Snake



This is one of the earliest board games ever discovered. Roll out a ball of clay and cut into a circle round a suitable object, e.g. a plate. In the middle, model an eye shape with a hollow pupil (mark with round dowel). Faintly mark a spiral from the middle to the edge of the board. Press a square-ended dowel into the board to mark squares along the spiral. Make two small balls as counters for the players – mark

with hieroglyphs to distinguish between them. The winner is the first to move their counter round the snake's body to the middle. Throw a dowel lightly into the air and see how many times you can tap it underneath with another dowel to determine your move.

*air-drying clay does not require a kiln and can be painted, but it is less pleasant to use than natural clay. It's the wrong colour for Egyptian artefacts, and it can crumble when dry. Natural terracotta clay is very smooth and is the same material as that used by the Egyptians. It can be fired in your own or another school's/college's kiln to produce long-lasting pottery which can later be glazed.

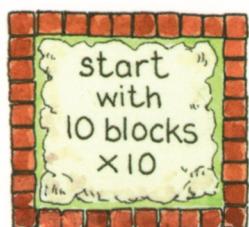


2 Soul House

Three-dimensional models of people's houses were placed in their tombs so that they would have a house in the afterlife. These models were known as soul houses. Try modelling your own bedroom as if you were looking down on it.

3 Canopic Jars

When bodies were mummified, the internal organs were removed and stored in canopic jars. A different god's head formed each lid and guarded the different parts. Model your jar and lid and leave to dry separately. Model a tiny internal organ (liver, intestine, etc.), leave to dry, wrap in white cloth and store in the canopic jar.



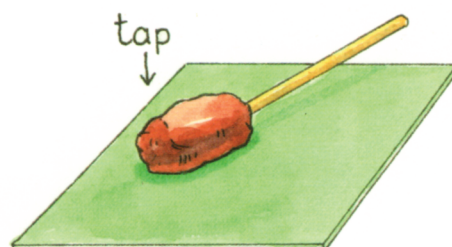
4 Pyramid

For patient potters! Roll the clay flat and cut into lots of 1cm blocks. Start with a square of blocks 10cm x 10cm and gradually build upwards in decreasing squares, until a pyramid is formed. Use tissue paper to support the inside if necessary. Stick blocks together using slip — rub an old paintbrush dipped in water on to a spare blob of clay until a smooth, sticky mixture is produced.



5 Eyepaint Holder

To make a tube as shown, stick a ball of clay on a narrow round dowel and tap gently on your mat to flatten each side evenly. Remove from the dowel and even out the shape. Use a painted round dowel as an applicator. To make eyepaint, see 'Kohl and Ointment Holders' card.

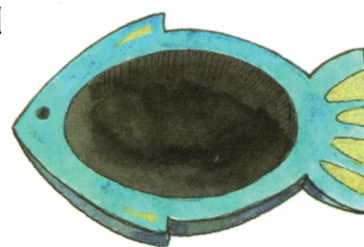


TIP: after clay work, wash your hands in the bucket to avoid blocking the sink. Pour the water on grass or garden to recycle — not down a drain.



KOHL OR OINTMENT HOLDERS

In Ancient Egyptian times, men and women would carry these either to hold perfumed ointment or black eyepaint (kohl) as protection for their eyelids against the fierce sun. The holders, many of which have been found



in tombs, were beautifully made in unusual shapes and often intricately decorated.

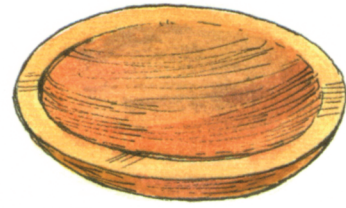
Note: only the bowl of a wooden spoon is needed for this activity. Save the spoon handle to use for the 'Fans and Flywhisks' card.

To make a kohl or ointment holder you will need:

a small cheap wooden spoon, handle sawn off • stiff white card • sandpaper • scissors • pencil • small hammer • small nail with head • turquoise, terracotta, black and gold paints • small paintbrush • emulsifying ointment or petroleum jelly (Vaseline) • dried herbs or black eyeshadow • mixing pot • teaspoon



First, sandpaper the bowl of the spoon where the handle was removed. The smoother you can make it, the easier it will be to paint and the better it will look. Turn the spoon bowl upside down and draw round it to make an oval on the white card. This is the lid. Cut it out, making sure the edges are smooth.

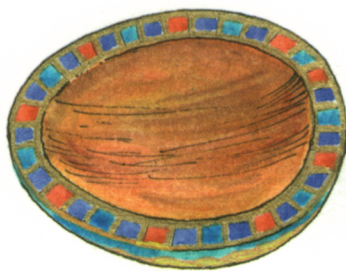


Next, paint the bowl and the lid. The colours given are

those most commonly used by the Ancient

Egyptians, whose paints would have

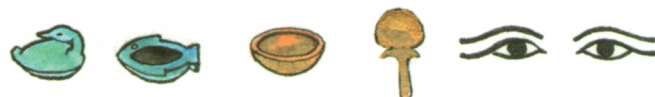
been made from ground rocks and minerals. There is no need to paint the inside of the bowl.



You should try to make your design as detailed and decorative as possible. Use pictures of Egyptian

artefacts to help you with the style.

When the paint is dry, fasten the lid to the bowl by tapping the nail in at point A. Do not hammer it in completely. Open the lid by sliding it to the side. Mix emulsifying ointment with ground herbs such as rosemary or lavender to make perfume, or with the crushed contents of an inexpensive black eyeshadow to make kohl. Put a little in your holder and smooth the top.



Jewellery abounded in the tombs of the Pharaohs, and jewellers are shown at work in tomb paintings. Gold was mined between the Nile and the Red Sea, and stones came from the deserts or were imported. Most Egyptian jewellery had a meaning rather than simply being an adornment.

JEWELLERY



Shell Jewellery

The earliest Egyptian jewellery we know about was made from shells.



Cowries meant you hoped to have children.

Jewellers later used gold to make shell shapes.



loop to hang

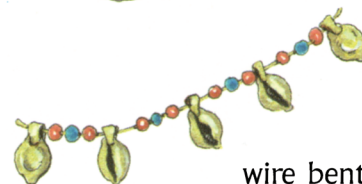
To make shell jewellery you will need:

Selection of small to medium shells • gold spray paint OR gold paint and brushes • strong glue • gold braid and thread • beads OR Sculpey modelling material in orange, turquoise and dark blue • fine modelling tools, e.g. bamboo skewers • thin wire • wire cutters



First, plan your jewellery. You may not be able to thread the shells, but you can hang them from a looped tab of braid (see left, and above right). Will you make a pendant (left), a necklace or a neckband (right)? What length of wire will you need and how will it fasten?

tabs of braid



wire bent to make a catch



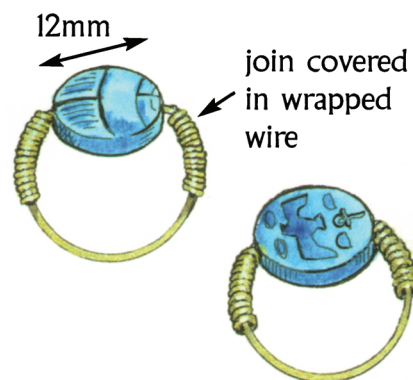
Select the shells you need, spray or paint them gold and leave to dry. Work out how many beads you will need and put these aside, or make your own from Sculpey – remember to make a hole through each one!

When all the components are ready, assemble your jewellery.



Scarab Rings and Amulets

The Egyptians wore rings with stones which swivelled round. One side was carved with a scarab and the other with signs or hieroglyphs to use as a seal.



To make a scarab ring you will need:
gold wire OR wire and gold spray •
turquoise Sculpey • fine modelling tools

First model your scarab from Sculpey. It should be about 12mm wide and 8mm thick. Use the wire to make a hole through it from one side to the other (see above). Flatten the back and mark your chosen hieroglyphs on it. Make sure that the hole is clear before baking.

Thread the baked scarab on to the wire and join the two ends by twisting, to fit your finger. Cover the join and the opposite side with wrapped wire as shown. Mask off the scarab with paper and spray the wire gold. Allow to dry before wearing.

You can make a flat winged scarab amulet from Sculpey, in three parts, as shown. Join the wings to the body with wire and hang from a gold thread or wire necklace by the holes in the wing tips.



WEIGHING THE HEART

*Experience the journey to the
afterlife through class drama*



To begin your drama, which can be carried out as part of your Egyptian topic or as a presentation for others, some children can perform the ritual described on 'The Apprentice Embalmer' card. After the opening of the mouth, one child can take the part of the dead person. At the start of her journey, a group of children can assemble to be the **hired mourners**. These were women who were paid to wave their arms, weep and wail, and throw dust over their hair to mourn the dead person. The more important the dead person, the more mourners were hired.

As the dead person walks slowly away from the mourners and Earth, the weeping can fade, and a suitable piece of music can be gradually faded in. The remaining children (the **embalmers** and mourners could discreetly move in to join them, but maybe not have a speaking part) now become the **assessor gods**, who kneel, with one knee raised, to form two parallel rows between which the dead person must slowly pass.



First, the dead person hands her heart (see end of card) to the **weighing god**, who places it on the scales. Then, as she passes through the assessor gods, those who have not yet had a part should accuse or interrogate the dead person. For example:

God 1: Have you stolen from your loved ones?

Dead person: In the name of Osiris, I have not.

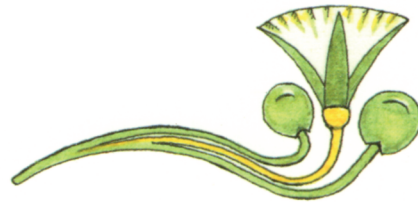


God 2: You have shown cruelty to the poor.

Dead person: By Anubis, I deny it.

God 3: Did you not murder your own slave?

Dead person: Isis herself knows this to be untrue.



You can continue this in your own way until the dead person reaches the end of the assessors. At the end sits **Thoth**, the god of wisdom. He must decide whether the dead person has spoken the truth.

Thoth: You are true of voice, and may pass to the kingdom of Osiris for your three thousand years of joy.

In this case the dead person can walk up to a splendid throne (a chair, perhaps on a platform, covered with a gold or

turquoise cloth) and be received by **Osiris** himself who is seated there.



On the other hand:

Thoth: You are false of voice, your heart outweighs the feather, and Amut the Eater of the Dead shall devour you.



In this case the unfortunate person is led away to the **fearsome goddess** and devoured (to suitable music). You may like to have two dead people so that both scenarios can be enacted. It would also add to your drama if you had a real set of scales with a large feather and two hearts, one made of thin paper and the other with a small weight attached!

